



The
POWERFUL
of the **INFLUENCE**
CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Donna Radtke

The Powerful Influence of the Christian Woman

by

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The first aspect of this topic that I want to cover is the last two words of the title, “Christian Woman.”¹ You cannot be an eternal influence for Jesus Christ unless you are a Christian woman. The biblical definition of a Christian is one in whom Christ lives. Christ lives in us by grace through faith, and our faith must be centered in the cross of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished there. He died for all of our sins – past, present, and future. He became a sin-sacrifice for us (2 Cor. 5:21), and thus He satisfied the divine law courts of Heaven by paying for our sins on the cross. There is nothing we can do or say or accomplish to add to Jesus Christ’s finished work on the cross, and that’s why the Bible gives only one condition for salvation: faith in Christ. “For by grace you have been saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). If you have never received this free gift of salvation by faith in Christ’s work, you won’t be able to use a lot of what I am going to say.

THE REALITY OF INFLUENCE

I would like to emphasize another very important principle before we begin to explore the Christian woman’s influence. The dictionary definition of “influence” is energy or potency, tending to produce effects intensively and invisibly; power arising from character or station; the exercise of moral control over the actions of another; directing power based on moral or social superiority. When we are saved by faith in Christ, God gives us the Holy Spirit to live within us. His job, of course, is to glorify Jesus Christ, to teach, to guide, and to convict us. Some teach that the Holy Spirit is just an influence on our lives, but the Scriptures plainly teach and speak of Him as a real person of the triune Godhead: “And because you are

1 This booklet is a transcription of a message by the same title that Mrs. Radtke gave to women at a Bible Conference in Duluth, MN in 1989.

sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Gal. 4:6). "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). He is the source of our power.

Now we will go back to the word "influence." Some of the conclusions that I came to are that:

1. Everyone wants influence.
2. Everyone has influence.
3. Everyone gives influence or influences.

You can see this in babies, children, adolescents, young people, old people, saved, unsaved, sick, well, smart, and not so smart. In other words, everybody wants influence, has influence, and influences in some way.

When a Christian woman is walking in the Spirit and allowing the Word of God to influence her mind, God Himself is influencing her, and she is acquiring the mind of Christ. God's love governs her words and actions. The power of the Holy Spirit enables her to submit her will to God's will.

Read Psalms 56-57 and see how the writer allows God's word to influence him. He writes of his problems, and interspersed with them he goes back to how God's influence could work on these problems and on his life. I can point you to this man, the writer of these psalms (we aren't sure if it is David although it sounds like him) and how he had many trials. He names them, and they are certainly not unlike ours. A lot of you—I don't care where you work or live, where you come from or where you go—have had "teeth" set upon you in some way or another (Ps. 57:4), and this is pressure. The answer is to

give the glory to God and praise Him and let Him take care of it. Learn to do that through psalms like these. I love the phrase “My heart is fixed” (Ps. 57:7, KJV). That is what we need, ladies. We all need a “fixed heart.”

I know how the flesh sometimes responds to a challenge or inspiration like this from God’s Word. Someone could be thinking, “Oh, that sounds just dandy and nice for you to read and say, but come back to the real world that I have to live in.” Or you might be thinking, “I want to be a powerful Christian influence, but nobody listens to me.” Our flesh does not want to be influenced by God’s Word. Don’t ever forget that principle. Your flesh does not want to be influenced by God’s Word and it will fight that influence.

What we should desire is to have influence that is true to God’s Word and that God can use for His glory. This should be our desire as it was with the psalmist and with Paul especially. You and I are exerting some kind of influence on somebody or something at all times. It can be a good influence or a bad influence, sweet or sour, mean or kind; it can be short lived or drag on and on, but we have influence. Wives influence their husbands, mothers influence their children, friends influence friends, teachers influence students, students influence teachers, and believers influence other believers.

Now I would like to address some of these influences in our lives. Many things influence us in just one day. Our environment can really knock us for a loop. The weather – we gripe, we wish, we pray, we hope, we predict, we talk, and we complain about it. But as Mrs. Erb would tell you, it’s there. It’s something you can’t do anything about, but the weather does influence you.

One thing I would like to bring out is how we train our children with a simple thing like weather. For example, it’s forty degrees below zero on Sunday morning, and you have to go out and start that car or plug in the block

heater or shovel some snow and all those things that come up with winter and the weather here in Minnesota. Maybe you were up half the night watching the late show or reading, and it's so easy to rationalize isn't it? "Oh kids, it's forty below. Let's go back to bed." And it's a good reason to stay home, isn't it? But on Monday morning, you wake up at four or five a.m. because of that song: "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." You don't rationalize Monday morning, do you? You get up and you shovel and you plug your car in and you allow a lot of time to get to work and you say, "Well, I've got a job to do, and people are depending on me to be there. The kids might miss something important if they don't get to school. That bus better come today. These kids have to learn to be tough!" My, aren't you a great spiritual influence! You see, you are influencing your children about what is first in your life: the dollar. They learn that fast, don't they?

Of course, some influences come into our lives, and they are there whether we want them or not. Weather is one of those. Environmental problems—they are just there. Power outages and things like that happen, and they influence our actions and our thinking. We complain, but we can't control these things. So we have to cope with certain influences that are beyond our control. I'm not going to dwell on that type of thing so much because we always manage to come up with too many other things of our own making without dwelling on the uncontrollable.

When we neglect God's Word and prayer, we let the world influence us, and we are not sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and we miss God's will for that moment and many moments. Instead of deliberately turning our brain towards the Lord when our day begins, we let other influences crowd in right away in the morning. The old sin nature will see to that. Instead of God's Word directing our actions, the influences and pressures of the moment

direct our actions. The radio is on, and we read something in the paper and grab that. The TV is on, and right away advertising is pulling all these covetous desires out and influencing our plans to spend the Lord's money. But this does not just happen privately. In turn, we influence someone else by our reactions to these things.

Have you ever watched a group of little girls playing house? You can watch them for a while, and you can know what the major influence is for each one of those little girls by the way they play house. And you can also know how their mothers react to things. If one little girl is playing the child and crumbles her cookie or spills her milk, you know how the mother of the girl playing the mom reacts to something like this because the girl does the same thing — she starts screaming.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING GOOD INFLUENCES

As long I mentioned TV, I'm going to dump that load on you. Even the world is catching on to the devastating effects of TV and the influence that it has on our children. We have actually become a backward nation scholastically because of the TV's influence on the thinking processes of our children. This isn't from a Christian book. The secular world has also come to this conclusion. They tell us that our children are out of shape physically, that they are becoming more insensitive to violence, and that they are becoming more materialistic.

But to me, one of the worst effects of TV on boys and girls is that they have the wrong kind of heroes. They look up to the wrong kind of people. In fact, they have no heroes, really. Children today are completely devoid of heroes. Most of the heroes that they look up to, like the athletes and the movie stars, are really very corrupt people in their personal lives, and they are not real heroes.

Just picture this: your kids are watching a *Rambo* video at home on Saturday – you know, “family night.” Then on Sunday morning they come to Sunday school, and their poor Sunday school teacher is trying to teach them a lesson about Timothy. She’s presenting him as one of God’s heroes; and why is he one of God’s heroes? Because Timothy was faithful. He knew God’s Word. After your children have watched *Rambo* and it is still fresh in their brain, they think, “You mean Timothy doesn’t *do anything* except trust and serve the Lord? That’s all? You should have seen *Rambo* blast into town with his machine gun!” And then another child tells the Sunday school class about somebody else in that light. See – they have no concept of a proper hero. They’re just looking at the muscles rippling. We can laugh at such an obvious illustration, but you know what we are doing? We are allowing those who believe in, and practice, a sexually immoral lifestyle to entertain and influence our children day after day. But what about you? How many of you are hooked on those daytime soaps day after day? These are the types of people influencing you.

You might say to me, “Well that’s how life really is.” But Christian ladies, we should desire to live above that. That’s where our power is. That’s where we have a powerful influence as Christian women living above the world. We have a position. We are seated in the heavens in Christ (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6). God sees us in Jesus Christ. He sees us as kings, priests, heirs, one in Christ. God’s Word tells us, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6). We live the Christian life by faith. We learn to trust God in little things, so when those biggies come, we just continue to trust Him.

Another great influence in our lives is music. So much is written in God’s Word about music – about singing to the Lord, making melody, and praising Him with rejoic-

ing, thankfulness, and song. Music is a big part of life, and we have such wonderful hymns that uplift our souls and encourage our hearts. But how do you use this influence of music in your home? Do you use it to your advantage? To your family's advantage? To your children's advantage? Don't forget now – music is a very powerful force. Sometimes I visit a home, especially where they have junior high children, and I go into the children's rooms and I see a whole wall of stereo stuff. The whole wall! Ghetto blasters all over the place and all these wires – these kids have everything. And this is a Christian home! You know, I always feel dismayed at that sight because I always know that if I look, there's going to be that stack of rock records right there too. They seem to go together. You know, the music that you grow up with has a way of entering your soul. It's a powerful force in your life. Your flesh automatically responds to the kind of music that you love because it has been instilled in your very soul.

When I hear country western music or rock music, my flesh responds but in a negative way. I don't like it. But when I hear Benny Goodman on his clarinet, or I hear Ella Fitzgerald or Rosemary Clooney singing, or I hear a good jazz sound, I respond. I'm not saying I'll always listen. Sometimes I do, but I don't always. I don't make it a part of my life like it used to be, but I respond to it because I grew up loving that music and it's there. But you know I'm really thankful that I can say that I have a new song in my heart too. I'm thankful for that new song. "Oh sing to the Lord a new song." That's how Psalm 98 starts. Many of the psalms start that way.

You might say, "Our kids hear rock music everywhere." I know they do. They hear it on the school bus, they hear it in study halls – everywhere. Did you ever go into a clothing store where it isn't assaulting you? That's how I feel when I go into those places. The music assaults me. It's just piped right in to many places. That influence

is there on your children, but that's one of those uncontrollable things. What can you do about it?

You have to exert good influence to combat the bad influence. And you can do it to a great degree by exposing your children to good music: band music, classical, and semi-classical. Teach them fun songs. You know, I just love the *Wee Sing* tapes for the little kids. There is *Wee Sing America* which teaches all these patriotic songs, and *Wee Sing Silly Songs* is fun for the children because that's where they're at, and there's nothing wrong with things like that. Teach them Steven Foster songs. You know, we always said that's why my son, Tom, chose Jeannie because we used to sing songs like "I Dream of Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair" in the car a lot, so it must have influenced Tom. And if you can, have your children take music lessons. It's a good discipline.

In your own home, say "No" to these trashy records. I can't believe some of the words to these songs. I have to read them because I can't understand anything these people say when they sing unless they repeat a phrase about fifty times and it finally sinks in. But say "No" in your house. Aren't you the boss? Aren't you bigger? Aren't you older? Even if your kids sneak and listen, at least you've implanted an influence, and they know that you don't approve of what they are doing, and they also know that there is something better. That influence won't leave them. It will stay. They might stray for a time, but that influence will remain.

How about at church? Do you encourage your kids to sing during worship, in choirs, or in small groups? You people who sing or play an instrument—have fun with the young people when you get together with them, even with the little kids. You can have an impromptu spiritual jam session with these kids. Sing with them a lot. Get some good music and tapes. Cars are good places to do this.

Then I want to mention too, ladies, if you're in the habit of reading these romance novels, like Harlequin books, they are trash. They're exciting, but I'll tell you they are trash. I have seen two broken marriages where I believe the women's thinking was directly influenced by these types of books because she was addicted to them. Burn those books. You don't need them. They aren't godly, and they can only influence you for bad. They create discontent, they create desires that are not wholesome, and they alienate you from your real life.

I would like to tell you a story I once heard. It illustrates how we insist on keeping things in our lives that hurt us because we lack the self-discipline that only comes from looking to Jesus. I heard this story about a bear that came upon a camp stove in a campground. This bear saw a large pot of boiling soup on the camp stove, wrapped its arms around that pot, and started off with it, only to start yelping in pain as the boiling liquid splashed on him. Someone later asked a park ranger, "Why didn't that bear drop the pot?" And the ranger said that the natural instinct of a bear is to hold tighter to whatever is hurting it. And I thought, "How many times have I held on tighter to something that was hurting me?" That's why we must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, because He will never hurt us, and He will point out things in our lives that do hurt us.

Then there is another influence I certainly don't want to pass by: a Sunday school teacher. A lot of you are Sunday school teachers or have been or will be. Or maybe you help at Bible school or work with boys and girls somewhere. Work with children is never wasted—never wasted. Don't ever forget that. Your labor is not in vain with children. I can't tell you how many times I've heard an adult say, "I remember this Sunday school or that Sunday school and I remember that verse. I remember somebody told me about Jesus when I was a little kid. I

remember that song.” That influence will not leave that child, so, Sunday school teachers, you have the privilege of being in a position to influence the minds and lives of children through prayer and through teaching God’s Word. You are in a position to lead children to Jesus Christ and encourage them to love God and His Word.

You can teach children from the nursery on up how to let God’s Word govern their actions and attitudes toward one another. Of course, there are many books and classes we can use to hone our classroom skills. These are important, but I don’t care how good a teacher you are or how sharp you are with children—if you haven’t allowed *yourself* to be influenced by God’s Word first of all, and if you’re not walking in the Spirit, you’re not going to exert a godly influence on those children.

Also, we must know what we are about in our teaching. We must have the goal to be an influence for God in their lives, not a pal, not a good buddy, not the favorite teacher—you know, this type of thing. It has to be for God, or it’s not going to count in the right way. You have to know how to give the Gospel clearly to the age level that you’re working with. Never assume that these boys and girls are saved just because they come with their Bibles and are very attentive (hopefully). You have to know how to biblically answer any questions, challenges, or problems.

I’ve learned through the years that discipline problems are best handled on your knees at home. Pray for those kids who have the discipline problems in your class. Don’t get frustrated and give up on them, but pray for them. And you know what? Your attitude toward these children will change! You will start to love these little brats! I don’t know how the Lord does this, but in some way they sense that. These children sense your love for them. No matter how naughty they are, they know that you love them and that you’re disciplining them be-

cause you love them. I've seen it happen over and over. The Lord will give you an interest and a love for your students that certainly does not come naturally.

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE: STILL INFLUENCING US TODAY

Let's consider some women in the Bible and how they encourage and influence us. You know, God didn't put the stories of people in His Word just to fill up pages. He put them there for a real purpose, and it does pay to read the books about people in God's Word and study their lives. I would recommend Theodore Epp's character studies very much. They are very good, and they will encourage your heart. But now let's look at some ladies.

Compare the influence of Esther or Mary Magdalene to a soap opera heroine who is cheating on her husband, abandoning her children, having abortions, running to shrinks, and using drugs. Just compare that to Esther and Mary Magdalene. You know, I love that character Mary Magdalene. We don't know a lot about her past. I always pictured her as this fallen woman. The Bible never really says that definitely about her. What we do know about her, though, is the lesson she taught us about giving something precious and valuable just because you love the Lord. She was so thrilled and excited about her Savior that only the best would do—not like collecting used tea bags for missionaries. I guess some of you don't know about that do you? Many years ago, this really happened. Some missionaries received a package from some people in the states. I don't even remember where they were—somewhere in South America. Included in this package were one woman's used tea bags because, you know, missionaries can do with anything. They can get some more tea out of that bag. And she thought she was being thrifty and wise with the Lord's money. Of course Mary Magdalene wouldn't do that.

Let's look at Esther. She was a queen, and she teaches us that God has a plan and a purpose. Esther's purpose in life was to influence the king to save God's people, the Jews. She didn't know that she was going to fulfill this plan. She didn't know what God's purpose was for her at the time. She also didn't know how the king would react to her request when she went in to make it. Her words in response to Mordecai, her uncle, when he challenged her to go into the king and make a request of him, have been an encouragement to me through the years. It wasn't her time to go in front of this guy, and if he turned the scepter down or gave her a "thumbs down," it meant death. That's how serious this thing was. And if he accepted her presence, then he would listen to her.

But in Esther 4:16, look at how Esther answers. She tells Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me [in other words, pray for me] neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; [and I love this last part] and if I perish, I perish!" I think that is just great. She first of all sought the Lord in prayer, she asked others to pray with her, and she made up her mind this was what God wanted her to do, "And if I die, I die." You know, you young girls, a lot of you seek worldly prestige so much in high school. You know: "Mom, if I don't get to go to that prom or homecoming dance, I'll just die!" Well then, die! Esther was willing to die for her people in doing the will of God.

In the book of Judges, Jael drove that nail through that fellow's head. An enemy of God's people had come into her tent. He fell asleep and she took, I suppose, a big hammer (I don't know what she took) and she drove a nail through his head, and that's how she killed him. Now, you know that took a lot of courage (especially the way I pound nails—it would have probably just gone

sideways). But you know the way that influenced me was to just think about that and ask, “Am I ready to defend God’s people from their enemies? Do I even recognize that we as God’s people, as believers, have enemies in this world?” You know you can drive nails into people’s hearts too through prayer and witnessing. We don’t literally go around driving nails into people’s heads, but I believe there is a lesson in Jael’s life to influence us too.

Now, about Lois and Eunice – what a beautiful story there. I’ve read in other books that Timothy’s father was either an unsaved Greek, which means he was a Gentile, or else he was dead or was gone a lot. (Maybe he was a trucker!) But this mother and this grandmother were very influential for Timothy by diligently teaching him God’s Word. I know, ladies, that not every saved wife has a saved husband. And I also know that not every saved wife has a husband who is serving the Lord and putting Him first.

And, of course, if this is true of you, it’s a thorn in your flesh, especially if your husband is not even interested in instructing his children in the Scriptures. He’s not willing, and he’s just doing his own thing. So you know what? You know what your flesh tells you to do? It tells you to sulk, whine, or nag. Or maybe your flesh tells you, “Well, he’s the boss. The Bible says that the father is supposed to take the spiritual leadership in the home, and he won’t do it so neither will I.” I’ve heard that lots. Well, you’re right: he is supposed to take the spiritual leadership in your home, and he is the boss. But what’s happening in the meantime? Your kids are growing up; they don’t wait for their daddy to start serving the Lord. And they are growing up with influences, but not from God’s Word.

You know, if this describes you, you should let the influence of Lois and Eunice encourage your heart. You get your duff off that couch in front of that TV, and *you* start

to read the Bible with them. *You* start memorizing God's Word with your kids. *You* start talking to them about the Lord and principles from God's Word. The problem, ladies, is that the flesh tricks us. You don't do that about school, if your husband isn't that interested in school, or meals, or anything like that. You don't say, "Well, we'll just wait till daddy gets with it." No you don't. And in the most important area of our lives, we get goofy don't we? You just start producing a "Timothy." That "Timothy" will in turn produce other "Timothies." You know, maybe your husband will never get with it.

And besides this, as a believer you can't blame another believer for your failure or lack of victory. You stand alone before the Lord. Learn that. Learn that; and learn that well, because your flesh always wants to blame your husband, the church, the pastor, other believers – always. That's your flesh. Galatians 6:4-5 says, "But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load." I have something written in my Bible under verse five. I don't know where I got it or heard it. (I'm getting more forgetful as I get older.) It sounds like something that Dr. J. Vernon McGee would have said. Under Galatians 6:5 where it says, "each one shall bear his own load," I have written, "Every tub must sit on its own bottom!" I like that. And sometimes when I want to blame or pass responsibility or something, this tub has to sit on its own bottom.

A DANGEROUS INFLUENCE

There's another influence that is so tremendous on women these days. This one is a killer. I believe that the women's liberation movement and the feminine mystique are built right into us, right into our old sin nature. You know, it just doesn't take much to bring that out in you.

I will use myself as an illustration. I could not believe my reactions to the results of the annual John Beargrease sled dog race. I was so pleased that the number one and number two winners were women! I was really rooting for them because they were women! I couldn't believe it. And when my son walked in, of course I said, "Well! Guess who won the sled dog race! Number one and number two were women!" Of course, John just said, "So?" But it dawned on me afterwards that I didn't even say their names. They were nameless. I was just flaunting the fact that they were women. Something inside of me just loved that. But in light of eternity, where's the value in that? "He that glorieth, let him [or her] glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

And you know, as I was thinking about influence, I couldn't help but think of women who have really encouraged and influenced me to look to Christ. I am very thankful for God's graciousness in sending these different women into my life, and I can look back and see how he did that. Since I was saved, which was in 1953, I've had the privilege of being influenced and encouraged by many women. And they've born great trials in their lives, like a miserable marriage and wayward or sickly children. They've had burdens and handicaps, and I've seen these women look to the Lord to direct them. I've also had the privilege of doing spiritual battle in prayer with women of great faith. They wanted prayer because they had faith that God was going to work something out. I've worked side by side with women in Sunday school, at camp, during Bible school, and in many other endeavors. I've seen these women handle their lives with great dignity that only comes through the Holy Spirit's power within them.

Now, my grandmother and mother were not saved when I grew up and neither was I, but their influence remains in my life too. That's normal. And sometimes

when you look back at something that influences you, it can be only for a moment, and yet it remains a lifetime. I thought of an incident that happened to me when I was in about seventh grade, and we had a nun teaching our class in the Catholic school that I was in. She was from Ireland, and she was always holding up Mary, the mother of Jesus, as our supreme example in life. And that wasn't too bad, but she missed the Lord Jesus Christ, of course. She would say, "Well, Mary wouldn't act like that" or "Mary wouldn't do that." I can still see her and hear her Irish accent. One incident sticks out in my mind. She was very upset because one of the girls was caught with a cigarette in her purse, and other girls at that time were coming to school with real bright nail polish. All this was getting under her skin, so one day she "preached at us" all, and she told us to picture Mary holding the baby Jesus with long, spiky fingernails polished bright red and a cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth. You know, that vivid picture never really left my mind. It was a real influence on my life because when I had my first baby, I could not smoke any more. I didn't want to.

Many aspects of the feminist movement have crept into the church, and because this movement seeks to promote self, your sin nature will grab it. Your flesh, your sin nature, is hungry all the time and when you hear these feminist ideas that promote self. Your flesh pigs out on them. For example, "You have to learn to love yourself before you can love others." That's not biblical, ladies. It's not true. Now, believers will rationalize this, and those of us who don't know better will say, "Well, you have to have self-confidence; you have to build self-security and understanding." Well, I'm going to tell you – that's a big bunch of bologna, and that's taken from the Greek word *bologna*. When this kind of thinking attacks, you have to remember verses like, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Proverbs 14:1 is one of

my favorite verses, and the Lord has used it many times to convict me: “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.”

I believe every woman should burn that verse into her soul, and every time that you are tempted to follow worldly philosophies of the feminist movement, recognize that you are going to either obey God’s word and build your house, or you’re going to obey your flesh and pluck it down. And how do you pluck it down? In the book of Titus, Paul is telling Titus what to have the people do for Christ in practical, everyday living. In Titus 2:3-5, he tells the older women to teach the younger women a few things. And I want you to understand the meaning of the words Paul uses. Someday you’re all going to be older women like me, and maybe someday you’ll be able to teach some younger woman something. Paul writes, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.”

Now, the word “sober” means habitually temperate, especially in the use of intoxicating liquors; self-possessed, calm, steady, sedate. Okay, in verse five Paul goes on to tell the older women to teach the younger women “to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Notice what these words mean:

- *Discreet* - prudent, circumspect, practical, wise, cautious, watchful.
- *Chaste* - morally pure, honest, pure in style, refined, good, having excellent qualities, reliable, not irritable.
- *Keepers* - to have the care of, to guard, to preserve, to maintain, to do, to supply with the

necessities of life, to manage, conduct, keep a pledge, confine, to remain in any state or condition.

Now really, does that sound like the pregnant, barefoot, mindless creature that the women's lib movement tries to tell us that a woman will be if she submits to her husband and if she follows biblical principles? I don't think so, but the phrase that I'd really like to emphasize to you now is to teach them to love their husbands. Now ladies, I really don't know how to teach you to love your husbands. I thought about this for a long time, and I want to tell you: it's worth every effort and every prayer on your part to love your husband. Every time you put that man down in your thinking and your words, every time you insult him, reject him or force him into a certain mold, you're plucking down your house. And every time you succumb to discontentment or self-pity (and who of us hasn't done that?) you're plucking down your house.

By plucking down your house, by not following the leading of the Lord, the Holy Spirit through His word, you're preparing yourself to be unfaithful. You are preparing yourself to have wandering eyes, commit adultery, think about divorce, and all of a sudden all those soap operas, movies, and romance novels start to make sense to you, and you become that personality. Pretty soon you change your makeup, your hairdo, your clothes, your body; you go back to school, you stop going to church, and you start having new friends. Now, none of these things is wrong in and of themselves, but we should examine our motives. Why are we doing these things? You can even get excited about flirting and getting a response to your flirting. This happens. Are we being discreet and chaste, or are we being foolish? You know, your flesh can even trick you into believing that you're doing these things as unto the Lord. You may even start giving the

Gospel more than you ever did in this new confidence of puffed up flesh. But God's Word calls you a foolish woman who's plucking down her own house. Love your husband. Cherish him, uplift him, protect him, even if he's a boorish, insensitive clod. You tell the Lord that. And remember: you're not perfect either. Tell the Lord how hurt or lonely you are, and let Him teach you how to respond. Let Him have the preeminence in your life and fill those voids. Don't do it your way.

To the young brides and brides to be – you think God created marriage to make you happy, don't you? You know, you think He invented marriage so you could be happy and have a beautiful wedding and a house and so forth. No, He did not! He invented marriage to picture the relationship of Jesus Christ to His church. We are His bride. We are His people. He gave Himself for us. He loves us, and He's praying for us. He's ironing out wrinkles and removing spots. Marriage is a picture of Christ loving His church. How does your marriage picture that to the lost? Where do you stand?

Now one area that I have not said too much about is the Christian wife's influence on her husband. It's great ladies. Your influence on your husband will make him or break him. You know that saying, "Behind every great man there's a great woman." I like that one and it's true. You can make your husband a great man. You have the influence and the power to do that. And I've come to the conclusion that with very few exceptions, the wife is the marriage partner who holds the marriage and the home together. And she's responsible for the flavor or the aroma of that household. You know, if the woman's a crab, that influence permeates everyone. If she's a whiner or discontent with everyone and everything, that influence spreads. If she's lazy or greedy or selfish, then that's going to be the flavor of that home.

INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN MY LIFE

I'm thankful for the influence of many women in my life. I'd like to even mention a few of them. Some of you know a lady named Margaret Gilles. This lady was a great influence on my life when we first came up here to Minnesota, and those of you who know her understand this perfectly. She was very gracious with this young greenhorn pastor's wife who was not raised in Christian circles. I didn't know from beans half the time what to do in a church or in certain situations. And she was very influential in my life at that time.

Mrs. Erb has been another great influence in my life. And you know, at our church we consider Lydia God's special gift to us. We're very thankful for her. Then I think of other ladies that I've read about, studied about, and heard about. I think of Fanny Crosby. If you ever have an opportunity to see her movie or read her book, you'll see how she was really handicapped. To me, being blind is a great handicap, yet the Lord used her. If you ever have the chance, read Joni Eareckson Tada's story. She was paralyzed from her neck down at age 17, but she came to know the Lord and the Lord has used her to encourage others.

Amy Carmichael is another lady who has written beautiful poetry and some hymns, I believe. She was a missionary. She had lots of problems with depression, headaches, and this type of thing, but the Lord used her in spite of these handicaps because she yielded to Him.

Corrie ten Boom is another one. Here's a lady who, because she helped Jewish people during WWII in Holland, was put into a concentration camp. Now, you might think that happened to lots of people, but wait a minute—she was my age. And I thought, "Wow, can you imagine being putting into a cell at your age—alone in a concentration camp and no bathroom!" She endured great hardships, and yet she has a glorious testimony.

She had victory for the Lord in that cell. These are women of great, great courage.

If you've never read Lydia Buksbazen's book, *They Looked for a City*, read it. It's the wonderful story of her mother, Yente. Yente was a timid, fearful woman, but she accomplished feats of great courage because she learned to pray and to trust God. This also takes place during WWII. Then, who could ever forget Wilda Mathew's story in *Green Leaf in Drought*? Oh, I wish you ladies would just curl up somewhere with these books and let these women encourage you and inspire you. How about Isabel Khun and her labor of love among her precious Lisu people of China? Betty Stam was a young martyr for Jesus Christ, and her testimony goes on. Elizabeth Elliot and Marge Saint—you have probably heard their stories too, but these are real heroes of the faith. These are the kind of people we should be upholding before our daughters, our friends, and ourselves. And of course, for their influence, I want to mention my own daughter and my daughters-in-law—they've been a tremendous influence in my life. I've very thankful for them.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The most powerful means of influence that a Christian woman who is walking in the Spirit can have is prayer. There are many women (myself included) who have been put in a corner. We've been absolutely helpless in a certain situation, and the only thing left is to cry out to the Lord in prayer. It's at times like this that you realize this is the most precious place you can be. It's a place of power and influence before the very throne of God, the throne of grace. When our Lord hung on His cross, He was physically helpless by choice. But what did He do? He prayed for the lost. Prayer is the ultimate influence that we have. Here is a poem about prayer that I think is very good:

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched fields refresh as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power.

Why should we ever weak or heartless be,
Why are we ever overborne with care,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?²

A FINAL ADMONITION

I've pictured us all standing before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ our Savior, and I can just imagine Him saying to us, "Now, what have you done with the influence you had? The influence I gave you with your husband and your children? In the classroom, in the home, on the job, with your money, with your talents? Did you use them for My honor and glory? Did you seek to edify the body of Jesus Christ and to influence the lost to be saved?" And you know, because we are full of excuses, we'll naturally say this: "But Lord, look at all the terrible influences I've had in my life. I was always sick. I had a handicap. My husband was unsaved or carnal. My parents were abusive. I was an orphan. I was homely. I never knew how to dress right. My house was a mess. I never had enough money to do anything right. My children were naughty or disabled or they were taken away from me." You know, the Lord will just tell us, "I gave you My Holy Spirit to abide with you. I gave you access to the

2 "Lord, What a Change Within Us" by Richard C. Trench.

throne of grace. No appointments were necessary – you could just come to Me in prayer, as you were, wherever you were. I promised you wisdom and discernment, and you had My Word. You had an assembly of believers without persecution to work with. I gave you many gifts in the church and personally. I made you my ambassador.” And maybe we’ll hear Him give us this promise that He gave us already, but He’ll repeat it: “‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9). I believe in that day, we’ll be without excuse.

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